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For my children
By H. D. Lane

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FOR MY CHILDREN

A story giving some of the experiences of the War 1861-1865 and of the times when Sherman fought the last battle of the War at Bentonville, N.C., and of the privations of those who lived along the line of his march in Wayne County, N.C.

I am a daughter of Mr. William Donnell Cobb and wife, Ann Spicer Collier. My father lived on his plantation nine miles from Goldsboro, Wayne County, on the South side Neuse River. He was a stock farmer and did not raise cotton until the war began in 1861. All Southern farmers then raised cotton to help clothe the Confederate soldiers. He did not approve of Secession, but wanted to fight for States Rights, under the flag which our fathers had fought for.

I was born and reared on the plantation. Before the war the planters employed governesses for their children, while young, then they were sent to preparatory schools before entering college. My sister and I were sent to the Misses Nash and Kollock's Preparatory School, in Hillsboro, Orange County, in 1860, and we were there when North Carolina seceded from the Union, and we helped with some of the other school girls to raise the first Confederate flag over the Court House. North Carolina seceded May 20th, 1861.

My father gave four sons to the Confederate Service. They were among the first to volunteer when Governor Ellis called for volunteers to defend the State. My brothers, Col. John P. Cobb; Capt. Bryan W. Cobb and Dr. William H.H. Cobb all volunteered as privates, but were made officers in the 2nd Regiment of N.C. State Troops. My brother, Dr. William H.H. Cobb graduated in Philadelphia Pa. just in time to get home and volunteer. At first he was in the 2nd. Regiment but was later transferred to the 4th Regiment as Assistant Surgeon. My fourth brother Rev. Needham B. Cobb was Chaplain of the 4th. Regiment; all were first sent to Fort Macon, for a few days, then to Virginia and fought under Lee. My brother Needham's health failed the latter part of the war, and he moved with his family to Raleigh.

After the death of Col. Charles Tew (First Col. of 2nd Regiment), my brother John was promoted for bravery on the battle field, from Captain of Company H. to Colonel, and brother Bryan W. Cobb was then made Captain. My brother Dr. W.H.H. Cobb and Capt. Bryan W. Cobb fought through the war and surrendered with Lee at Appomattox. My brother Col. John P. Cobb lost a leg in the Battle of Winchester, Va., Sept. 19th, 1864, was taken prisoner and confined in Fort McHenry until Lee surrendered.

New Bern fell into the hands of the Yankees, March 21st, 1862. My father soon moved his family to a farm four miles from Bentonville (where the last battle of the war was fought 1865). Just after he moved General Burnside came from New Bern on a march for Goldsboro, passing our place, but our forces had burned the bridge at Spring Bank on Neuse River, six miles from Goldsboro; after being repulsed by our troops, Burnside with his army, returned to New Bern. He did not destroy the peoples' property.



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After a short time my father moved back to his home, and left his daughter, Mrs. Nathan B. Whitfield living there. My father and her husband were members of the Home Guard. After the Battle of Bentonville, Sherman marched to Goldsboro, passing, and resting one night on my father's plantation. The day before Sherman reached our home my father called his slaves together and said to them "In a few days you will be free; Sherman will be here and destroy everything; the crop is already planted; he cannot destroy that. We have lived together in peace, as you know; the land, seed and fertilizer are mine; if you stay and work the crop, you can gather it in two portions; you can then select a man and I will select one and these men shall say which portion I am to have." Our negroes remained on the place and finished the crop.

Sherman had given orders to his troops when he reached Fayetteville to destroy all property, private and public, which would be of any use to the enemy; that he was going to wind up the war. The order is recorded in the Congressional Records of the United States in Washington, D.C. His army carried out his instructions along his line of march. They destroyed our household furniture, leaving the bed on which my sick mother lay, and a large dining table and a few chairs, which were once the property of a Colonial Governor of North Carolina, (Governor Tryon) whose furniture was confiscated and sold at auction, in New Bern, after the Revolutionary War, and the dining room suite was bought by my grandfather John Cobb of Kinston, N.C. This, table and chairs was left for Sherman and his officers to use while they rested on our plantation. His army destroyed literally every useful thing, filling all the wells on the place with dead hogs, shooting the cows and all other living things, leaving what they did not want lying on the ground. They rolled all the barrels filled with the year's supply of molasses, into the front hall, burst in the heads and let the molasses run on the floor, after which they brought quantities of rice, oats, peas, meal, etc. and poured all of this on the molasses; then went upstairs, cut the feather beds and shook the feathers down on it, and then ran horses over it, through the house. They broke out all the window panes, broke doors and window blinds, cut up the carpets and made saddle blankets for their horses. They killed every living thing on the place except the rats and dogs and carried off all the remaining years supply of food stuff. My parents lived a few days on the dead fowls. The Yankees moved my mother's maid with her family, into the room adjoining my mother's bed-room, thinking they would be humiliated living in the house with their former slaves. These negroes proved a blessing; they cooked for the Yankees and thus got food for my parents, as long as the army was passing. Of course the dead fowls soon got beyond being useful for food. Soon after the main army passed the stragglers who followed put a rope around my father's neck and were going to hang him, but did not, as the negro men interfered and drove them off. My sister with her two children, who were then living on the farm near Bentonville, was left alone with her slaves, while her husband was with the Home Guards. No one ever expected Sherman to reach North Carolina by way of Bentonville, but were looking for the Yankees to come from New Bern. Bentonville being the last battle of the war, Sherman made a triumphant march to Orange County, and the last remnant of General Johnston's army of Confederate soldiers surrendered to him in April 1865. Our Government had a gunboat stationed at Kinston, and trees all along the banks of the Neuse River below the town of New Bern, had been cut and thrown in the river, thus keeping the river free from Yankee boats which might come if New Bern fell. That is why Burnside came by land instead of by boats. Also

Also General Schofield and his army rested on our place while on their way to Goldsboro.

In 1864 my sister and I were day scholars at St. Mary's, Raleigh, but after Richmond fell we quit school and went in the hospitals as nurses. All the wounded from Richmond and Petersburg were brought to Raleigh, and later from Bentonville. Every available place was filled with wounded soldiers; school buildings, fair grounds and private houses. The ladies of Louisville had sent a car load of cooked provisions to my brother, Rev. N.B. Cobb, to be distributed to the retreating army of General Johnston. My parents also had sent a quantity of cooked food before Sherman came to our home, to be given to the wounded men in Raleigh. My brother called some of the Raleigh ladies to help distribute the food. Negro servants were stationed along the sidewalks along Fayetteville Street, who filled baskets for the ladies who stood on each side of the retreating army. Poor ragged (bare-footed many of them), worn and weary Boys in Gray. The city officials went down to meet Sherman the day before and surrendered the city and asked protection for the people and property. Wheeler's Cavalry of the Confederate Army passed through the city at night. Next morning Sherman came marching triumphant up Fayetteville Street, at the head of his army. Several of Wheeler's men had turned back, to fire the depot in which was stored all the remaining ammunition of the Confederacy, and food supplies were piled around the depot. One of the men rode down the street and fired on Sherman, turning down another street and through several other streets before he was captured near St. Mary's School. Sherman wanted to hang him in Capitol square but the city officials prevailed on him not to do so. He was killed near St. Mary's. When the bomb shells in the burning depot began to burst, the citizens thought Sherman was waging war on the city. One twelve year old white girl was killed by the bursting bombs. Guards were placed at every man's door to prevent angry soldiers from entering private homes.

As soon as a woman was permitted to ride the train, I went with my uncle, Col. George Collier and his wife, back to my old home, and to my distressed parents. After reaching Goldsboro my uncle had to take the oath of allegiance to the U.S. Government before we were furnished a ragged topped ambulance and two old blind cast off army horses and a negro driver. We had to cross Neuse River on a pontoon bridge, the real bridge having been burned by our soldiers on their retreat. This bridge was made of planks placed cross-wise on two lines of small boats (or canoes). A regiment of negro soldiers was stationed there, with white officers. The Colonel placed a line of soldiers on each side of the bridge, and with two more leading the horses, we got in and drove across the bounding bridge in a pouring rain. He had told us to get out before starting across, as the blind horse might turn off and plunge in the river. When we reached home I found my mother still sick in bed, with her faithful servants waiting on her. My parents and the negroes were then drawing rations from the Commissary in Goldsboro, the negroes walking nine miles bring their portions, and my parents' also, in bags on their backs.

On the plantation was a large mulberry orchard, planted for the hogs. These berries were ripe when I came home. There was a negro regiment stationed near the house and the white Colonel told my little brother if he would gather and deliver the berries to his soldiers, they would pay him \$2.00 per gallon. The Yankees had destroyed all the vessels on the place

and we picked up tin cans (some large and some small) on the camp ground which Sherman's army had left, and he and the negroes gathered and delivered many gallons of berries and came back with empty cans and pockets full of greenback money and feeling happy over the prospect of buying better food from somewhere.

My brothers came home with only the clothes on their backs. We borrowed beds, etc. from neighbors who did not live along the line of march, and when my brothers and father changed their underclothes, they went to bed and the negro women took their clothes to the branch 1/4 mile from the house, where we were all forced to get drinking water, bringing it that distance in cans.

After the Battle of Bentonville my sister was left without food or protection. An officer in blue advised her to take her two children and the two negro women with her, and leave, as he could not protect her, but not get separated from the two negroes. She left with them, walking four miles in the woods, just far enough from the marching Yankee Army not to be lost or discovered by them; she reached a neighbor, Widow Cogdel, whose son, a Confederate soldier had been wounded, and was lying delirious with fever. The Yankees had not been there, and Mrs. Cogdel was having dinner cooked for sister and the children when a squad of Yankees on horses rode up, taking her horses and firing the house in several places. My sister, Mrs. Cogdel, her daughter and the servants carried her son out on a bed, to a field near the house, and there saw the house burn down. Just after sunset an officer in blue rode up and asked what they were doing there. My sister replied "To starve and die." After a few minutes he said "My God, I have a wife and little ones at home," and dashing off soon returned with an ambulance and took them six miles farther to a Mr. McCullen's where the Yankees had been but had not burned the house. There they spent the night. The next morning Mr. McCullen found a cart wheel and a buggy wheel and an axel which the Yankees had failed to cut or burn with other things, and with a few pieces of plank, fixed a conveyance for them to ride in. She then went ten miles to her mother-in-law, Mrs. Sarah Whitfield.

The Yankees had not been there, but while she was giving her experiences quite a lot of them came. She did not live on the line of march but these men were stragglers from Sherman's army which had passed on their way to Goldsboro the day before. The old grandmother, 84 years old, lived with her daughter and granddaughter whose sons were in Lee's army. The dear old woman had fallen a month before and was in bed with a broken hip. The Yankees ordered her to get up, which she could not do, then one took her by the feet and one took her shoulders, and tossed her across the room, going out, locking the door, bidding none to go out or to come in. It was cool spring weather and a fire was burning; as night came the fire gave light as long as it lasted. The lamps and candles had been taken out before the Yankees came, to be trimmed and washed. As the fire grew low, the old lady begged not to let the light go out. There was a very large box of paper patterns, used to cut the darkies clothes, which my sister's sister and mother-in-law cut in strips, and one by one was held burning by the old lady's bed. The paper lasted till daybreak. The Yankees destroyed almost everything except what was in their room and a small quantity of provisions. My sister and the two negroes stayed a

few days and then went to my parents. They were riding army horses, bare-back, the make-shift vehicle having been destroyed by the last group of stragglers. These were horses which Sherman had discarded when he replenished his army with the horses of the planters along the line. When she reached home she found devastation and sickness everywhere and the whole air was reeking with dead animals. My father died the following October 20th, 1865 after the crop was gathered. My mother sold a farm in Tennessee which enabled us to live more comfortably.

Before the negro regiment stationed on our place was disbanded one of the officers found stored in a barn on the river about four miles from the house, a small quantity of corn which the Yankees had not taken away. He had the corn (a cart load of it) brought up to the house and stored in a bath room at the end of the back hall, upstairs. We had no water-works or big bath tubs, but did have nice shower bath closets. The back stairs ran up in this hall, and the windows being broken there was no way to keep the hungry starving rats out, and at night they went up the stairs by hundreds. We would arm ourselves with sticks and beat among them, some nights getting about a peck, and a hand full of tails, and some nights after, we would get the bob-tailed rats. The corn proved quite a help in the way of food. We would boil it in lye made from oak ashes, until the husk would come off, then soak it in clear water until all the lye was out of it; then we would cook it until soft and fry it in some of the fat white meat we drew from the Government. This varied our diet of hard tack, fat meat, brown sugar and bad coffee.

We did not drink coffee during the war. My father had an order for coffee and sewing thread, on our blockade steamer whenever she went from Wilmington. The coffee was sent to the boys in the army, and the thread was used on the sewing machine to make their clothes. Our coffee was made of dried sweet potatoes, rye, wheat and barley, all parched brown and ground together, putting some of it in a little bag, we would drop it in the coffee pot of hot water and let it boil ten minutes.

We made all sorts of things during the war. Drugs were hard to get for the hospitals and all kinds of herbs, barks and roots were dried and sent to the hospitals. Large beds of lettuce were planted and let grow a tall stalk, and early in the morning some one would go out with a needle and slit the stalks in several places; the milk would run out and harden on the stalk, and at sunset someone would go with a little knife and piece of paper and collect the hardened drops. This was used as opium; also rose leaves were dried and sent with drugs.

My mother died December 1867. After her death my brother Col. John P. Cobb and his family lived at the old home until he was elected County Court Clerk and moved with his family to Goldsboro and several years later went to Florida. After my mother's death her land was divided among her children and most of it rented out. Later, after my brother moved to Goldsboro, none of us wanted to live there, and we sold our portions of the land, most of it to our white neighbors, and a small portion to some

of our former slaves who paid for it in yearly installments of cotton. I lived with my brother John at the old home, until I was married to Lieutenant William Penn Lane, son of Rev. William K. Lane and wife Penelope Mumford, who lived on their plantation near Goldsboro, their house later being burned by Sherman. My husband left the University of North Carolina

and joined the 67th Regiment of North Carolina Cavalry. Col. John D. Whitford was colonel of the regiment. He was in service in Eastern North Carolina. In the Battle of Cobb's Mill, April 1865, near Kinston, he was one of seven men left of his company; the others were killed or wounded. His picture, also my brothers' pictures, are in Clark's History of North Carolina State Troops of the Confederacy. These pictures were taken and left with their parents when they marched away to fight for their liberty. This is true history.

An enterprising Yankee came South after the war and patented our home-made War Coffee, and called it Postum, and later on reduced the same to a powder and called it Instant Postum which requires no bag or boiling.

After passing through the horrors of war we were subjected to the terrible time of the Reconstruction days and bayonet rule of General Canby, of the U.S.A. Government. At the first election after the war closed, the ignorant negroes of the South were given the privilege of voting. There being so many more negroes in the South than white men and they being instigated (by Yankees who remained in the South) to all kinds of lawlessness, no man's life was safe, and a woman dared not leave her yard without a pistol for protection. This was when the order of the Ku Klux Klan was organized and every decent white man became a member. Oh! the horrors of Reconstruction days!

(signed) Harriet Cobb Lane

